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Ministering Angels, The Camden District Red Cross, 1914-1945

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Ministering Angels, The Camden District Red Cross, 1914-1945

Abstract

Ministering Angels is the story of conservative country women doing their patriotic duty in an outpost of the British Empire. From 1914 Camden district women joined local Red Cross branches and their affiliates in the towns and villages around the colonial estate of the Macarthur family at Camden Park. They sewed, knitted and cooked for God, King and Country throughout the First and Second World Wars, and the years in-between. They ran stalls and raffles, and received considerable community support through cash donations from individuals and community organisations.

Using the themes of soldier and civilian welfare, patriotism, duty, sacrifice, motherhood, class and religion the narrative explains how the placed-based nature of the Red Cross branch network provided an opportunity for the organisation to harness parochialism and localism for national patriotic purposes.

The book delves into the story of how Camden's Edwardian women provided leadership at a local, state and national level and created ground-breaking opportunities that empowered women to exercise their agency by undertaking patriotic activities for the first time. The book details how Camden women were encouraged to immerse themselves in the Red Cross ministering angel mythology, and serve 'their boys' by volunteering at branch sewing circles and fundraisers or as voluntary aids at military, civilian and Red Cross hospitals.

In their wake Camden women created the most important voluntary organisation in district history, a small part of the narrative of the Australian Red Cross, arguably the country's most important not-for-profit organisation. Their stories were the essence of place, and the success of the district branches meant that over time homefront volunteering became synonymous with the Red Cross.

Ministering Angels is a local Red Cross study of volunteering in war and peace that provides a small window into the national and transnational perspectives of one of the world's most important welfare organisations. Local studies like this book are not common and they tell the story of ordinary people doing extra-ordinary things in extra-ordinary times.

Keywords

1914, cross, red, district, 1945, camden, angels, ministering

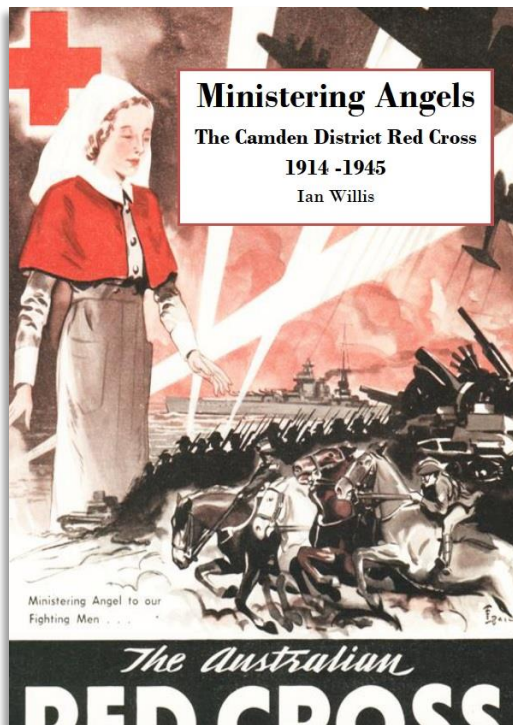
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CAMDEN DISTRICT RED CROSS STORY



Book Cover

Ministering Angels

The book tells the story of the patriotic efforts of Camden district women during war and peace. Read how the women of the local Red Cross created the most important wartime homefront organisation in district history.

Author, Dr Ian Willis, Honorary Fellow at the University of Wollongong, traces the 1914 origins of the local Red Cross back to the Boer War. He tells how Red Cross workers supported 'their boys' in wartime by knitting, sewing and fundraising. Peacetime then took their attention, only to re-start patriotic wartime activities again in 1939.

Price: \$30 plus postage

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August 30, 2014. 2.30pm.

Launch at Camden Museum, 40 John St, Camden.



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